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Message Text

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APPROVED BY:P:DTICE
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FOR UNDER SECY NEWSOM

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 8986 ACTION SECSTATE INFO LONDON
WHITE HOUSE DATED JUL 17:

QTE: S E C R E T TEL AVIV 8986

EXDIS - DIST AS NODIS

LONDON FOR ATHERTON, SUANDERS AND AMB EILTS
BONN FOR THE SECRETARY'S PARTY

FROM AMBASSADOR LEWIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, IS, US, EG
SUBJECT: WEIZMAN ON THE TIGHT ROPE

1. AT CONCLUSION OF WEIZMAN'S LENGTHY DEBREIFING ON HIS
MEETING WITH SADAT AT SALZBURG (SEPTEL, WE TALKED ALONE
FOR ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES ABOUT HIS EXTREMELY DELICATE
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POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CORSS-
CURRENTS RUNNING SO STRONGLY HERE IN THE WAKE OF THE
LAST WEEK'S EVENTS. HE IS GENUINELY A VERY TROUBLED
MAN.

2. WEIZMAN UNDERSTANDS THAT SADAT IS USING HIM, AND PERES AS WELL,
TO UNDERMINE BEGIN'S CABINET IN THE HOPES OF SEEING ONE OR THE OTHER

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EMERGE AS PRIME MINISTER OF A NEW COALITION. HE DOES NOT DENY THAT
HE WOULD BE HARDLY ADVERSE TO BEING PRIME MINISTER, BUT HE IS ANYTHING

BUT CERTAIN THAT A REVAMPED GOVERNMENT WITHOUT BEGIN WOULD BE ABLE TO
MAKE PEACE ALONG THE LINES OF SADAT'S APPARENT REQUIREMENTS, MUCH
LESS SELL THE AGREEMENT TO THE ISRAELI PEOPLE WITH BEGIN IN ACTIVE
OPPOSITION. HE CLAIMS HE HAS NOT TALKED WITH PERES ABOUT ANY SUCH
NEW COALITION PROSPECTS, AND INSISTS THAT IF BEGIN IS UNDERMINED
AND FORCED OUT OF OFFICE IN SOME WAY OR OTHER THAT HE, WEIZMAN, IS
FAR
MORE LIKELY TO END UP FINISHING HIS NEW HOUSE IN CAESAREA THAN
PARTICIPATING IN AN ALTERNATE GOVERNMENT. (I TAKE THAT DEMURRER
HOWEVER WITH A LARGE BOX OF SALT.)

3. WIEZMAN IS PERSUADED COMPLETELY THAT SADAT MUST DEAL WITH THE
ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AS A GOVERNMENT; HE CANNOT BE THE ONLY THREAD
HOLDING THE NEGOTIATIONS TOGETHER IF HE AND THE THREAD ARE BOTH NOT
TO SNAP. HE DESCRIBED THE JULY 16 CABINET MEETING IN COLORFUL TERMS.
MUCH OF IT WAS APPARENTLY DEVOTED TO VERY STRONG ATTACKS BY
SHARON AND HURWITZ IN PARTICULAR ON SADAT'S TACTICS AND
WEIZMAN'S ROLE. THERE IS, HE SAYS, A VERY GREAT SENSE OF
INDIGNATION IN THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT SADAT'S SEEMING
DETERMINATION TO DESIGNATE ONLY ONE MEMBER OF THE ISRAELI
GOVERNMENT WITH WHOM HE WILL DO REAL BUSINESS, AND THE CABINET WILL
NOT PLAY THE GAME. BEGIN IS DEEPLY WOUNDED
BY SADAT'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ATTACKS ON HIM, AND DAYAN
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ALMOST EQUALLY OFFENDED AND EMBITTERED BY THE OBVIOUS TACTICS SADAT
IS EMPLOYING. WEIZMAN MADE CLEAR SEVERAL
TIMES IN THE CONVERSATION THAT HE WAS VERY DOUBTFUL THE CABINET
WOULD APPROVE HIS RETURNING ALONE TO MEET WITH SADAT IN ALEXANDRIA
AFTER THE LONDON MEETINGS. NOR, HE
SAID, WILL HE ARGUE THE CASE FOR FURTHER PRIVATE SESSIONS
AGAINST THOSE IN THE CABINET WHO BITTERLY ATTACK HIM AS "SADAT'S
MAN IN ISRAEL."

4. THE ONE BRIGHT SPOT IS THAT WEIZMAN HAD A LONG
PRIVATE SESSION WITH DAYAN LAST NIGHT (SATURDAY) IN WHICH HE MADE
A MAJOR EFFORT TO REBUILD COOPERATION BETEEEN THE TWO. HE IS
PROPOSING THAT THE GOI SET UP A GENUINE NEGOTIATING
TEAM, HEADED BY DAYAN, TO INCLUDE HIMSELF AND YADIN AT
LEAST TO CONDUCT THE NEGOTIATIONS, AT EL ARISH OR ELSEWHERE.
UNLESS SOMETHING LIKE THIS IS DONE, WEIZMAN IS
FILLED WITH FOREBODINGS.

5. WEIZMAN SAYS THAT BEGIN IS STEADILY REVERTING, UNDER THE
PERSONAL BARBS COMING FROM CAIRO, TO HIS FORMER SELF--FILLED WITH
DEFIANCE AND THE OVERTONES OF A MASSADA COMPLEX WHICH
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN LATENT BUT WERE LARGELY ABSENT FROM HIS

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OUTLOOK FOR MANY WEEKS AFTER SADAT'S TRIP TO JERUSALEM. SHARON
IS PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS ROLE VIA-A-VIS
BEGIN, EXERCISING THE UNDENIABLE INFLUENCE OVER BEGIN WHICH
STEMS FROM BEGIN'S ADMIRATION FOR HIS AS A MILITARY LEADER AND
MANY SHARED CONVICTIONS ABOUT THE INALIENABLE NATURE OF ISRAEL'S
ROLE IN THE WEST BANK. WEIZMAN SAID THAT HE HAD MADE SOME EFFORT
TO TRY TO CO-OPT SHARON TO A MORE MODERATE LINE BUT HAD BEEN
DOUBLECROSSED REPEATEDLY IN RESPONSE. HE SAID THAT ONE OF THE MAIN
REASONS HE HAD DECIDED NOT TO RESIGN FROM THE CABINET IN JUNE WHEN
HE DISAGREED SO STRONGLY OVER THE ANSWERS TO THE "AMERICAN QUESTIONS,"

WAS HIS FEAR AND INDEED HIS CONVICTION THAT SHARON WOULD BE NEMED
DEFENSE MINISTER WERE HE TO LEAVE THE JOB.

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6. WEIZMAN SAID THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING PRESIDENT CARTER
COULD DO IN THIS CURRENT SITUATION WOULD BE TO
SOMEHOW GET ACROSS TO SADAT THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE
BEGIN GOVERNMENT AS A GOVERNMENT AND NOT RELY WHOLLY ON
WEIZMAN, A TACTIC WHICH WAS BOUND TO LEAD BOTH SADAT AND
WEIZMAN TO GREIF. IF SADAT WILL NOT SEE DAYAN ALONE, THEN THE
EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO GET HIM TO DEAL WITH WEIZMAN AND DAYAN AS
A TEAM IN SOME FASHION.

7. IT WAS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT SADAT'S EUPHORIA ABOUT HIS
SESSIONS WITH WEIZMAN AND PERES AND THE SENSE OF
INEVITABILITY ABOUT A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT HERE WHICH
HE PROJECTED IN HIS CONVERSATION YESTERDAY WITH EILTS
HARDLY SQUARES WITH WEIZMAN'S ASSESSMENT. YET, WEIZMAN
FOUND MANY POSITIVE ELEMENTS IN THIER MEETING AND AGREED
WITH ME THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE WAYS IN
WHICH THE JIGSAW PUZZLE COULD STILL BE PUT TOGETHER, IF
ONLY THE PLAYERS DO NOT CHOOSE TO PLAY THE WRONG PIECES.
HE IS BOTH EXHILARATED BY SOME OF WHAT OCCURRED IN SALZBURG,
AND AT THE SAME TIME CONVINCED THAT THE GAME CANNOT
BE WON BY THE CONTINUED PUBLIC DENIGRATION OF BEGIN AND TO A
LESSER EXTENT DAYAN WITH ALL THE EMPHASIS BEING PUT
ON HIM. IF THERE IS ANYTHING AT ALL WHICH THE U.S. CAN
DO TO CHANGE SADAT'S STYLE, WEIZMAN PLEADES THAT WE TRY TO DO SO.
VIETS UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CAT-B, DEBRIEFINGS, MEETINGS, PEACE PLANS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE180221
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: P:DTICE
Enclosure: REPEAT TEL AVIV 8986
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: N780006-0309
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780751/aaaabqyp.tel
Line Count: 161
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2df4f071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1983110
Secure: LOCK1
Status: <DBA CHANGED> MCM 20040610
Subject: WEIZMAN ON THE TIGHT ROPE
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, PBOR, IS, US, EG, AU, (SADAT, ANWAR), (WEIZMAN, EZER)
To: JIDDA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2df4f071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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